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Empowering Our Ministry: The Filling/Baptism with the Holy Spirit

Acts1:1-11

Thomas Michael Smith
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The passage which Coleen read this morning from Acts 1 is one that is read quite often, and the elements in that passage which are potentially troubling are often glossed over -- this morning I am not going to do that. I just want to focus your attention, if you can, if you might have your Bible open, 'So when they had come together they asked Him, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Now, the context is that Jesus has been raised from the dead. Remember that Luke is the author of the Gospel of Luke and he's the author of Acts. The Gospel of Luke tells the story of the Gospel, Acts tells the story of the church.

So, Jesus has been raised from the dead, and He's hanging around with His disciples, and this is just before what's know as the Ascension-when He goes to be with the Father. Of course, we know that after He goes to be with the Father, He then sends the Holy Spirit. But, the disciples say in verse 6, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" Now, what's going on here, folks, and this is important to understand …the Old Testament Hebrews understood that when the Messiah would come he would come in one fell swoop and he would restore glory to Zion. But they missed something. We Christians believe that they, the Hebrews of the Old Testament missed something important. There's that business in Isaiah that talks about how the Messiah has the role of a suffering servant and there's also the piece about the Messiah being a conquering king. We (Christians) believe that Jesus came the first time in the role of the suffering servant and He will come the second time in the role of conquering king. And so you see what happened here is that these are Hebrew and Greek Christians, but with the Hebrew influence, asking a Hebrew question in verse 6. They are saying, "OK, you've raised from the dead, you are back to life again. Does that mean that now that you have done the suffering servant part, is now the time when we are going to have the restoration of the kingdom part? And Jesus says to them, "NO." He says, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority but you, you the church, you who are already Christians, you shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be my witnesses here, and here, and here. You shall receive power, and what will you do with the power you receive? Again, He is talking to the Christians. This is important. He's talking to Christians. He says, "You Christians will receive something else. You will receive power and when you get that power, what are you going to do with it, according to the text? You are going to witness. You are going to glorify Christ, and you are going to witness. You are going to start in Jerusalem. You are going into the region outside of Jerusalem (Judea and Samaria), and you are going to go much farther beyond. And so, when the power comes, you are going to take that power and use it to witness for Christ. That's our job. Christians are those who accept Jesus as Lord, and once you are a Christian, you are able to receive (to be clothed) with power from on high, and be empowered to witness. In witnessing to Jesus as the Christ, we glorify Christ.

The series that I began last August 1st on 'empowering our ministry' is just that-an attempt to try to teach Biblical material that guides us towards reclaiming an element that existed in the church 2000 years ago, but which has not been part of many

churches for a long, long time. The idea is to have the signs and wonders and marvelous things that God has done throughout history happen on a regular basis in our midst. The consequence of the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples in Acts, Chapter 2, which we are not going to read this morning. The consequence of that wasn't primarily that people spoke in other languages. The consequence was that on that day 3000 people became Christians. That's the consequence that I'm looking for. I'm looking for the consequence in our church that we quadruple, quintuple the number of people who come to Jesus Christ. It's not about becoming a big giant church, not about any desire to be a mega-church. That's not my goal in life. I'd not want to build a bigger building and become a famous big church pastor. The issue here is, what's the effect of this power that comes upon us? The New Testament says that we become more effective witnesses for Jesus Christ and more people come to know Him.

So, empowered ministry for me means this: It means that we take God seriously and that we take Scripture seriously. That we once again plug into the electricity source that provides the energy for us to do the ministry that was envisioned by Jesus when Jesus ascended to the Father and said, "You guys wait around here. The Holy Spirit will come upon you. You will receive power and the effect of the power will be that more people will become Christians and that you will share all things together. That you will be a unified community, that the church will be known in this community of Vacaville as a place where we are effective in witness and justice and ministries of compassion where people will come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. That's the goal. Keep it in mind."

Now, something happened about a hundred years ago. It's almost a hundred years ago, maybe 95 years ago. Some sense of the teaching that I'm trying to explain to you was reclaimed by people we now know as Pentecostals. How many of you have heard the word 'Pentecostal'? O.K., now, the primary denomination that emerged from the Pentecostal movement was called what, do you know? Assemblies of God. Alright, now Assemblies of God churches made in the last 10 years or so a clever name change. I think it's kind of clever. If you see a church in town that says the '(Name of the town) Christian Life Center,' that is an Assemblies of God church.

The Pentecostal movement began and reclaimed a sense of the power of the Holy Spirit upon our lives, but they erred in two ways. One, they decided somehow in their theology that what was associated with this power was what they called a second work of grace. The idea that you at some point are going to become fully sanctified. Now, we have talked about sanctification in this way. Theologically, we say that at the point in which you become a Christian, you become justified. You become Christ's person. And then you enter into a lifelong task of becoming sanctified, of becoming holy, becoming godly. Has anybody made it yet? Then I am safe in saying that that's a lifelong process. You know, this is a 'two steps forward, one step back' routine that we do almost every day. Again, if there is somebody that's fully sanctified here, I want you to come up and do this for me. 'Cause you know where I am going to go with this. But, basically, the whole process of our lives is sanctification. And then at the end when we come to know Jesus, and He comes the second time, and we go to heaven, we become glorified. That's the third step. We stop the sanctification process. Pentecostals, for some reason, because it doesn't say this in the Bible, they decided this was going to happen-- Boing!-- immediately to fully sanctified, fully holy, after they had this second experience. There was a second experience. Now, what I'm going to say to you this morning is that I think there is a second experience. I think that there is a second experience that Christians need to have. It's when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. It's a baptism of the Spirit. We're going to call it here an anointing, an empowerment of the Spirit. But what the Pentecostals did was associate with this second experience their idea of full sanctification

Now, the second thing the Pentecostals said was that the second experience, the 'baptism' or anointing or empowering of the Holy Spirit, is always, always, evidenced by something known as speaking in tongues. Now, we'll get to that in a future sermon, I'll eventually explain to you what speaking in tongues is all about. Those that are even remotely curious are really curious. I did a Bible Study last Wednesday morning that was supposed to last an hour and in an hour and 45 minutes I had to go, and they were still asking me questions. So, it's going to take a while for us to explain all of this material. But essentially, the Pentecostals associated the second experience, the infilling of the Holy Spirit that Jesus speaks about in Acts 1:8, with the spiritual gift of speaking in tongues.

But the Biblical view is that sanctification is a process. There is no single gift that is always the evidence of this anointing or empowerment that comes to Christians after they have already accepted Christ. But there is an empowering, an anointing. There is something to be had as a Christian. Just like these Christians were waiting around in Jerusalem talking to Jesus, saying, "OK, is it now we are going to get to step 2? Are we now going to be able to have this coming of the conquering King, restoring Zion?" Jesus says, "No, it's not for you to know, but it's not now." What you need to do is wait for the Holy Spirit to come upon you, and when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, you will be filled with the Holy Spirit in a different way that you are already as Christians, and that empowerment will enable you to do some exciting things that in turn lead to thousands of people coming to the Lord.
I'm going to stop at this point and share an experience or two, just to try to illustrate. We were at a conference not long ago and we heard the leader talk about something I think can be telling and helpful here. This man, this leader, happens to go to a church in North Carolina at a place called Montreat. I have not been there, but Pat and Jeff have been there and say it is very lovely. Has anybody been to Montreat, North Carolina? It is lovely, right? OK. There is a Presbyterian Church there. One of the people that attends church this Presbyterian Church on a regular basis is a man by the name of Billy Graham. You have heard the name, right? Same man, famous evangelist.. So, apparently the man who is leading the conference with me, he's sitting in the pews at his home church, and fellow member Billy Graham is the guest speaker for the day. And he's excited about hearing Billy Graham. Now, how many of you have ever seen Billy Graham in person? How many of you have ever seen Billy Graham as close as I am to Judy, here? Alright. Billy Graham was on the board of trustees at the seminary I attended and we would walk by him all the time. Taller than I am and very impressive guy, blue suit, just, just emanates trust so that was 25 years ago when I was in seminary, so Brad, the man who led the conference, said he's sitting in the pews and he's waiting for Billy Graham to come up and preach. And Billy Graham gets up from his seat and it's like this (hunches over and walks very slowly as an elderly person would) just caught in whatever disease he has, I'm not entirely sure, and a very frail. Brad says to us, "This is Billy Graham?" I expected, you know, BILLY GRAHAM! Not this. Then apparently, Billy Graham came up to the pulpit straightened up his body somehow, spoke with a full voice and five minutes into his sermon, which lasted 30 minutes, Brad, who's been a Christian for 30 years, and has been a missionary in Taiwan, said he wanted to come forward and recommit his life to Christ because whatever Billy Graham was saying, Brad wanted some of it. It was incredible. Everybody in the place wanted to forward. The non-Christians did come forward and accepted Christ. Then Billy Graham finished and he turned back into this (repeats feeble walk). And he went back and he sat down. That's what I'm talking about. That's the Holy Spirit coming upon a person for a short-term episodic, dynamic exercise of power. That's what happened in the first century to the Christians when the Holy Spirit came upon them.

I had an experience when I went to this conference. I heard this Brad talking about this second experience, this, this second thing for those who were already Christians. I've been a pastor for a long time but something came to me as I listened with the team of seven of us who were in attendance. Brad talked about his pastor at that same church in Montreat, a man named

Richard. He talked about how Richard had been hearing Brad do these conferences for a long time and had heard him talk about this anointing, this empowerment that could come through the laying on of hands or prayer and can happen also along the road but often through the prayer of others and Richard the pastor said "you know, I want that. I want to have that too. Whatever that is. I've been a pastor, he said, for along time, but much of it has been trying to do ministry within my own power, and if there's something else, something from God, I want that too. And so Richard went to a conference that Brad was leading and asked to have hands laid upon him and hands were laid upon him and after the hands were laid on and they got up and they smiled and Richard said "I don't think anything happened. Nothing happened to me. No speaking in tongues, not prophesying, not healing anybody, I'm just still Richard". Darn! Brad said that Richard went off and walked for three hours, depressed that he didn't get something "cool".

So I heard this story of Richard, and at one point, I went to Brad and the other leaders of this conference and said the same thing. I said, "I'd like to receive the laying on of hands to receive the baptism or anointing or empowering of the Holy Spirit too." And they did, they laid hands on me and prayed over me, and our team that went with me to this conference laid hands on me too. They laid their ands on me and I received a very personal healing over something that I had always assumed would always be with me, and now isn't, for which I am so very thankful, but like Richard, nothing dramatic seemed to happen to me after this baptism or anointing or empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Certainly no speaking in tongues or any other particular manifestaiton. So I know I had the experience but as far as I can tell, nothing else 'happened.'

Now, a little bit more of the Richard story was that a few weeks later, Brad was on some kind of a conference someplace else, and he called home and his sixteen year old daughter got on the phone and said "Hey, Dad! Dad! I've got to tell you what happened to Richard! Something happened to Richard!" "What? What happened to Richard?" Brad thought he'd had a heart attack or something. "Well Dad, he was preaching, and then he wasn't there, it was like God was there instead." Oh. Oh. Brad called back a couple of weeks later while at a different conference and this time, his 13 year old daughter answered. "Dad! Dad! Dad! Something happened to Richard!" "What happened?" "I don't know. But it was like the Holy Spirit showed up. He (Richard) wasn't there."

But of course Richard was there, and the 13 ear old was trying to say something else, that some change had come over Richard And that was what attracted me. I didn't know if that would happen to me. I still don't know if it's happened to me. But when you are baptized or anointed or empowered with the Holy Spirit, there is an access to a power ministry in the Spirit is new. The object of such a prayer, of such a laying on of hands, is the Holy Spirit come upon us, to enable us to do the kinds of things they did in the first century. Why can't we? The Bible doesn't we shouldn't be able to. Our theology doesn't say we shouldn't be able to. There's no reason why we shouldn't be able to do things they did in the first century. And to bring thousands of people to the Lord. Let's do that. That's what I'd like to do.

There was a sense in my life, I guess that the only change that I could describe is that, prior to that experience, it felt to me like when I'd wake up in the morning, I would talk to God but I'd need to go to the radio, you know the kind that has the dial, and dial in God's station, and then talk to God. Now, it feels like when I get up in the morning I've got my Internet connection hooked up all the time, what they call a DSL connection. It's like it's like it's always connected, it's like a trunk line right into my head and heart. And it feels different somehow. But I still have no idea what God is doing.

In my newsletter article, not this month but last month, I tried to talk about this. I said that when one has this second, this

anointing, this empowerment experience, it will have two effects. The first is, and I'm quoting myself, to make operational the doctrines of the Christian faith, the doctrines that define us as Christians, these move from being faith statements or statements of intellectual assent to being lived experience. Jesus Christ begins to be experienced as alive and present as the resurrected Lord who forgives sin and defeats Satan, provides guidance and loves with everlasting love. The Bible becomes intensely important. It's words become sweet and filled with power and authority, not only is there a desire for Bible Study, but verses of Scripture begin to offer clear guidance for daily life. That's the first thing that happens. The second thing is that we begin to participate in the Holy Spirit's sphere of activity. That is, as opposed to the Spirit simply being in the background to point to Jesus, which of course He does, or to inspire Scripture, which of course He does, we begin to receive an infilling of the Holy Spirit and begin to experience the Holy Spirit's unique sphere of work. We begin to discover the Holy Spirit as someone who is part of the Trinity, to whom we can offer prayer, and He begins to function as a counselor, as Jesus promised He would. And the Holy Spirit emboldens us to freely witness to Jesus Christ, and the spiritual gifts that all Christians are given begin to be truly experienced in their fullness. And they begin to be used as ordinary events and normal equipment for doing Christ's work. The normal equipment for doing Christ's work. The Christian has his or her spiritual eyes opened, and the Christian, and this is the scary part, becomes aware of the presence of Evil. And we being to be involved in spiritual warfare as well. The Catholics might call it exorcism, we would call it a ministry of deliverance. But it is something that is going to be in our path.

Where do I come up with all of this. What we found, what I found, and I checked this very carefully in the Greek, and I ask you to trust me on that, and if not, come and I will teach you Greek, is that we find that the word 'fill' is used differently. There are two different kinds of Greek words for the word 'fill.' Just like the word love has four words in Greek, there's phileo, (used in the city name 'Philadelphia', which means brotherly love, and eros, which means erotic love, and agape which is God's love for men, there are four words, I can't remember the fourth word for love. Just so there are different words that are interpreted, translated by the word 'fill' in English. The first word is pinplami. Can you say that, pinplami?. Pinplami is used in the Greek where the notion of 'filling' is temporary and is followed immediately by action. This form of 'filled', when used in reference to the Holy Spirit corresponds, to the use of the word upon. Or to the English words, 'charged' or 'oaded' or 'stuffed' or 'moved.' An expression of the outward operation of the Holy Spirit for power. In Matthew 27, the guards took a sponge and they filled it with vinegar. And what did they do with it? They brought it up to Jesus and the word that's used there, pinplami, has the sense of filled with vinegar, but in a short time it wouldn't have vinegar. The sponge fills up and then empties. That is the concept of the word, pinplami. Or all day in the synagogue they were filled with wrath. But the word, pinplami, suggests in Greek that they were filled with wrath but then in a while they weren't going to be angry anymore. Or they're fishing and they pull up a net, and the fish 'filled' both boats. But we know that the normal state of affairs is that boats aren't normally always 'filled' with fish, right? We take the fish out of the boat and we take the fish into the port in and we sell them. The 'filling' (of the boat) is temporary and results in some type of dynamic action. The sponge is filled with vinegar, so that it may be drunk (which is the action). The boats are filled with fish and begin to sink (the action caused by the 'filling'). The boats are not always filled with fish, nor the people always filled with wrath. These are temporary as well as recurrent conditions. The same is true when pinplami is applied when referencing the Holy Spirit. This 'filling' with the Holy Spirit is temporary and results in an clear, dynamic action. There is a sense of movement of being caught up by the Spirit. And being empowered into doing something active for God. And Elizabeth was 'filled' with the Holy Spirit, and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women" in Luke 1. And his father Zachariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied saying, this or that, or some group of disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak in tongues. And Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them …; or, when they had prayed the place they were gathered together was shaken and they

were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God with boldness. And so Cornelius departed and entered the house and laying his hands on him, he said, 'Brother Saul, Jesus who has appeared to you by the road which you came has sent me that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit,' and immediately something like scales fell from his (Saul's) eyes and immediately he proclaimed Jesus Christ. This is the same pattern that we find in the Old Testament. It is consistent with the Old Testament image of the Spirit of Yahweh, resulting in dynamic action . This 'filling' is a temporary, episodic thing that happens to those who are already Christians. Once they have been anointed or empowered or once you are open to this experience, it is quite possible for this Holy Spirit to come upon you for a temporary, dynamic action. That's what I'm talking about. That's what I want to reclaim in the life of the church here. Note that this coming upon for power happened to Elizabeth, it happened to John the Baptist, it happened to Zechariah. These were Old Testament people. These are not people who are filled with the New Testament Holy Spirit. But they were filled in a short term burst of activity. It is a temporary episodic phenomena that happens again and again and again and again. The disciples may have experienced the baptism or the anointing or the empowerment of the Holy Spirit the first time at Pentecost, but after that they were filled many times, as it says in the book of Acts.

Now, the second Greek word that is used is playrao. This word is used to describe a state of being. Generally, it means long-term. It means saturated with something, as a tree must be saturated with sap if it is to be alive and produce fruit. There is no sense of dynamic action, rather a state of being is described. And the child grew and became strong, 'filled' with wisdom, Luke 2. And the house was 'filled' with the fragrance of ointment. May the God of hope 'fill' you with all joy and peace and believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Ephesians 4, "He who descended is He who also ascended far above all heavens that He might 'fill' all things." And suddenly, Acts 2, " A sound came from heaven, like the rush of a mighty wind and filled all the house where they were sitting." And Peter said, to Ananias, "Why has Satan 'filled' your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and keep back part of the proceeds of the land?" Or, 'We strictly charged you not to teach in his name yet here you have 'filled' Jerusalem with your teaching." And Jesus, 'full' of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was lead by the Spirit 40 days in the wilderness tempted by the devil. Or, 'therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, 'full' of the Spirit and wisdom. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 7, "But he, 'full' of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God." Over and over and over again there is no sense of dynamic movement when playrao is used in the New Testament. These are descriptions of the states of being, reflecting changed character. These are the descriptions used by the Greek that describe the presence of the Holy Spirit in all of us who are Christians. When you have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, Boing! You have the presence of the Holy Spirit. That's what playroco is about.

So, I am saying to you this morning, that there are two different ways to see the word 'filling'. One has to do with this presence in our life that is not dynamic, not episodic, but long-term. The in-dwelling presence of the Holy Spirit that is ours as a possession or counselor, the person who leads us to Jesus, who gives us gifts to build up the body of Christ. Whenever playrao is used, the sense is about long-term filling. And note that the Old Testament people aren't mentioned when playrao is used. The Old Testament people are only mentioned with the 'upon' stuff, not with the 'infilling' stuff because the New Covenant, the New Testament, is the only place where this long term infilling of the Holy Spirit exists.

What God wants from us as a Presbyterian Church is a blend. He wants a dynamic balance of these two concepts. He wants us as a church to both be infilled with the Spirit of God which produces changed character and the fruit of the Spirit, and He wants us to be anointed and empowered with the Holy Spirit which produces dynamic acts of power and a real appropriation

and use of all of the spiritual gifts of the Bible to use for acts of power to manifest the presence of Jesus. And what's the point of all this side of the house? The point is to bring 3000 people to Jesus. The point is always to glorify Christ and to be effective witnesses to Him. What I'm trying to say is that for generations the Presbyterian Church and this church have most likely operated with one half of the house. We've operated with the fruit of the Spirit, the indwelling of the Spirit, so we have avoided dealing with the Spirit that comes upon us for acts of power. My exhortation, my hope is that you will look carefully at this material as I have, we'll make it available to you. If you have doubts or questions, talk to me, but we ask you to trust because this is a movement of the Spirit that's alive and well in the church universal, not just in the Pentecostal churches but in churches across the country. There's some counterfeit stuff out there too, like Benny Hinn and others. You can always tell is fakery is someone tells you that you are going to be completely sanctified, or if you have to have just this one manifestation of the Spirit. So we need to be careful. But we also need not to so careful that we 'quash the Spirit.'

This Biblical teaching has been in Presbyterian Churches for decades as well. It's an exciting new thing that's happening in the life of the church-a reclaiming of a sense of power and a sense of ministry that leads to effectiveness. You know, not to pick on the Presbyterian Church, but 1998 they reported nationally it was the first year in a long time that they hadn't aggregately lost members and that was good news. But that isn't good news, that we stop losing members, hemorrhaging as a national Church. That isn't good news. What would be good news is that we're gaining thousands of converts every year, and I think that the churches that are doing that are the churches that have reclaimed a sense of the fullness of Holy Spirit as a means of glorifying Jesus Christ and extending His witness to our world. I pray that you will, as I have, seek an anointing and empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

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